

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
27 September 1963

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Aftermath of Haitian Exile Incursions

1. We doubt that further exile raids of the scale and nature undertaken by the Cantave group in August and September can succeed in bringing about Duvalier's overthrow. Such raids have had the effect of strengthening Duvalier's position and of weakening that of his internal opponents. It is unlikely that anti-Duvalier incursions into Haiti would ever arouse any substantial response unless disaffected Haitians were convinced that the attack would be sustained, that it would be in sufficient strength to afford protection to those who joined it, and that it would fairly quickly succeed in overthrowing the regime. If these conditions were met, an anti-Duvalier operation would probably produce a rapid bandwagon effect, including military defections, resisted by only a few die-hards and irredeemably compromised persons.

Effects of Past Raids

2. The two raids into Haiti during August and the one on 23 September by exile forces under General Leon Cantave have not weakened President Duvalier's grip on the country. Most of the information at hand argues that these attacks have strengthened the regime by causing it to consolidate its forces and by giving it three successive "victories" over its loudest opponents.

3. In any case, we believe that the raids have not improved the prospects of the anti-Duvalier cause. The morale of the exile movement cannot have been lifted. The raids have caused Duvalier to reinforce his garrisons in the northeastern border area and to keep them on alert. They have destroyed, at least in the short run, the asset of surprise in northeast Haiti.

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4. During the August incidents the Haitian military establishment's performance was mediocre. Its combat capabilities were palpably limited, even by Latin American standards.

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5. Military morale may nevertheless be becoming an important problem to the Duvalier regime, despite the boost the military undoubtedly experienced as a result of the decisive defeat of Cantave's forces on 23 September.

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6. The first two raids also upset some of Duvalier's civilian officials. During the first raid in early August, some senior officials became alarmed and several sought to arrange for political asylum outside the country.

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It could be concluded that many lower-echelon regime officials were also quite jittery at the time of this raid. The official and public reaction to the second raid apparently was less sharp, however, probably because the regime's success in dealing with the first raid had increased its confidence. The events of 23 September and the ouster of the Bosch government in the Dominican Republic less than 48 hours later presumably have further buoyed the confidence of Duvalier and his officials.

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Next 3 Page(s) In Document Exempt

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